
ON THE APPLICATION OF THE *APAÑṆAKA* METHOD TO LIVING A BALANCED MARRIED LIFE ACCORDING TO THE *SAMAJĪVI* SUTTA

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze *Apañṇaka* Method by using the idea of a balanced livelihood as a case study. In order to achieve a good married life, a married couple needs to live together following a Buddhist principle namely Balanced Livelihood (*samajīvidhamma*). When the couple practices faith (*saddhā*), virtue (*sīla*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*pañña*), it leads to benefits in this and the next life. Even though the existence of the next life cannot be empirically proved, it acts as an important guide and impetus for conduct in this life. In this way, Buddhist teachings contribute practically to the harmonious life of the married couple.

Introduction

Good family life contributes to a better society. But the strength of married and family life depends on following certain teachings and principles. Buddhism provides such principles. One of the most well-known *suttas* for this purpose is “Balanced Livelihood” (*samajīvidhamma*). This deals not only with family life in this life but also in the life to come. This article aims to analyze the Buddhist Method called *Apañṇaka*¹ and whether this Method is effective for leading to a balanced life.

The Longevity of Balanced Livelihood

Balanced Livelihood, in this context, means husbands and wives living together in a perfect balance. This is described in the “*samajīvī sutta*” of the *Āṅguttaranikāya*. In this sutta, the Buddha addressed *Nakula Pitā* and *Nakula Mātā*;

Herein, householders, if both wife and husband desire to behold each other both in very life and in the life to come, and both are matched in faith, matched in virtue, matched in generosity, matched in wisdom, then do they behold each other in this very life and in the life to come.

If both, believers, self-controlled, well-spoken,
Living as *dhamma* bids, use loving words
One to the other, manifold the blessings
That come to wife and husband, and to them
The blessing of a pleasant life is born.
Dejected are their foes, for both are good.
So in this world, living as *dhamma* bids,
The pair, in goodness matched, in the deva-world
Rejoicing win the bliss that they desire.²

So what is expressed here are directions for couples living their marriage life with balanced livelihood. They must be:

1. Matched in faith (*saddhā*),
2. Matched in virtue (*sīla*),
3. Matched in generosity (*cāga*),
4. Matched in wisdom (*pañña*).

Married couples who practice according to this principle are considered as the best of lay-disciples. They are considered to be males and females, in “intimate conversation”. Other texts such as the Long knee, the *Koḷiyan* or the *Dīghajāṇu Sutta* of the *Āṅguttaranikāya* gives an even clearer explanation.

Faith means one must believe in the Buddha and believe in the awakening of the *Tathāgata*: (*arahant*), fully awakened (*sammāsambuddho*), adept in knowledge and conduct (*viññācaranasampañño*), well going (*sugato*), a world-knower (*lokavitū*), incomparable (*anuttaro*), a tamer of tamable men (*purisadhammasārāṭhi*), among *devas* and men the teacher (*sathādevamanussānam*), Buddha (*Buddho*), Exalted One (*bhagavāti*). Virtue is connected to abstinence related to the five precepts, that is to say the abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from carnal lusts, from lying, abstains from taking sloth-causing liquors, spirits, and wines. Generosity means having a mind free of avarice, free of meanness; freely bounteous, open-handed, gladly giving, yoke-mate to asking, he is a cheerful giver. Finally, wisdom is connected to the destruction of ill. In addition, the *Dīghanikāya* indicated benefits of *sampadā* as; “No beings arise in happy, heavenly state after death because of the gain of relatives, wealth or health; but beings are reborn in such states because of gains in morality and right view”³

Interestingly, the longevity of a balanced livelihood also leads to two additional benefits. They are *diṭṭhadhammattha*; the benefit in this life, and *samparāyikattha*; the benefit in the life to come, as evidence shown in the *Mahānidesa* scriptures “***Diṭṭhadhammiko vā attho samparāyiko vā attho. . .***”⁴

The former benefit deals with ordinary present life, while the latter deals with the extra ordinary next life. But a potential question is whether we can prove the existence of a next life?

The Belief in the Existence of a Next Life

Even though the existence of next life cannot be empirically proved, Buddhism suggests that the belief in a next life as is a worldly right view;

And what, *bhikkhus*, is right view that is affected by the taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions? There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions;

there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are beings who are reborn spontaneously; there are in the world good and virtuous recluses and Brahmins who have realized for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world” This is right view affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions.⁵

In this *sutta*, the Buddha explains “if one has right view towards these matters of life, one will live one’s life safely and will have no risk to fall under the unhappy existence (*apāya*)⁶.

In contrast, the *Dīgha Nikāya* stated about the one who does not believe in the next life as a mistaken worldly view;

Your Majesty, there is nothing given, bestowed, offered in sacrifice, there is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds, there is not this world or the next, there is no mother or father, there are no spontaneously arisen beings, there are in the world no ascetics or Brahmins who have attained, who have perfectly practiced, who proclaim this world and the next, having realized them by their own super-knowledge.⁷

The following chart exhibits the worldly right view and worldly wrong view for easy understanding;

	Worldly Right View (<i>Lokīya Sammādiṭṭhi</i>)	Worldly Wrong View (<i>Lokīya Micchādiṭṭhi</i>)
1	There is what is given	There is nothing given
2	There is what is offered	There is nothing bestowed
3	There is what is sacrificed	There is nothing offered in sacrifice
4	There is fruit and result of good and bad actions	There is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds
5	There is this world	There is not this world
6	There is the other world	There is not the next

	Worldly Right View (<i>Lokīya Sammādiṭṭhi</i>)	Worldly Wrong View (<i>Lokīya Micchādiṭṭhi</i>)
7	There is mother	There is no mother
8	There is father	There is no father
9	There are beings who are reborn spontaneously	There are no spontaneously arisen beings
10	There are in the world good and virtuous recluses and Brahmins who have realized for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world	There are in the world no ascetics or Brahmins who have attained, who have perfectly practiced, who proclaim this world and the next, having realized them by their own super-knowledge

This chart, shows the comparison between worldly right view and the mistaken worldly view. The one who does not believe in the next life is following a mistaken worldly view. In fact, the only way to prove the next life is to die and experience it for oneself. So what is the Buddhist response to this uncertainty?

***Apaṇṇaka* Method**

In Buddhism, there is an interesting principle in the above mentioned *sutta* called the Incontrovertible Teaching (*Apaṇṇaka*). which is also known as the “*Apaṇṇaka* method”. The Buddha taught this to the *Sāleyyaka brāhmins*, a *brāhmana* ascetic, who did not believe in any religions and pointed out how an intelligent person should behave toward the following views:

1. Nihilism
2. No-action view
3. Non-causation
4. Denial of formless existences
5. Denial of the extinction of becoming⁸

Nihilism results from a tenfold wrong view. For instance, the belief that this world does not exist, or the next world does not exist. The no-action view denies of the effects of good and bad actions. Non-causation means to believe that purification and defilement of beings occurs for no reason. The denial of formless existences means to deny the existence of the formless worlds. Lastly, the denial of the extinction of becoming means to except the existence of the formless world but to deny the existence of *nirvana*.

Based on our daily life we are faced with many difficult situations and challenges to our beliefs. Therefore, the application of *Apaṇṇaka* method can help us in dealing with those difficulties as Veerachart Nimanong points out:

The *apaṇṇaka* sutta is an epistemic psychological attitude form of interpretation of all kinds of doubts on the Buddha's teachings. The *apaṇṇaka* which does not involve logical reasoning cannot be inference; but inference is an aspect of *apaṇṇaka*.⁹

Thus the *Apaṇṇaka* method is a Buddhist practice which is very useful and helpful for us to apply in our daily life. In the same way Venerable Hegoda Khemananda considered the following steps how is it possible for us to make use of it in order to determine any uncertain circumstances. He gives the example of whether the Buddha ever visited Sri Lanka:

1. (According to the folk-lore) it is possible that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka.
2. (In the opinion of those who deny folk-lore) it is also possible that the Buddha did not.
3. We pay homage to Sripāda with the belief that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka.
4. If the Buddha had visited Sri Lanka in actuality we would gain "merit".
5. If the opposite was true and the Buddha did not visit Sri Lanka still the religious practice motivated by the belief would result in both generating "merit" and spreading a good name for us.

6. In this manner, we gain irrespective of the factuality of the belief that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka.

In this manner, an intelligent person would conclude that it is right to pay homage to the Buddha whether he visited Sri Lanka or not. This method which is truly a Buddhist method may be applied to any situation.¹⁰

Applying the *Apaṇṇaka* method into the mentioned case of balanced livelihood can possibly be as follows:

1. It is possible that a life to come exists?
2. It is possible that a life to come does not exist.
3. Husbands and wives should live their life in the belief that they will meet again in a next life.
4. If a life to come does exist, they will be together.
5. If a life to come does not exist, this belief will lead to a good relationship in the present life.
6. In this manner, they gain irrespective of the existence of a next life.

In this manner, an intelligent person would conclude that it is right to live their couple life virtuously whether the life to come exist or not. However, different application of *Apaṇṇaka* method can be shown by the following concluding table;

	Analytical Issues	Ven. Hegoda Khemananda	The Researcher
1.	Folk-lore	The Buddha visited Sri Lanka	The life to come exists
2.	Deny folk-lore	It is possible that the Buddha did not visit Sri Lanka	It is possible that a life to come does not exist
3.	Our belief	We pay homage to Sripāda with the belief that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka	Husbands and wives live virtuous relationship with the belief that they will meet again in the next life

	Analytical Issues	Ven. Hegoda Khemananda	The Researcher
4.	If the belief is true	If the Buddha visited Sri Lanka we would gain the merit	If a life to come does exist, they will be together
5.	If the belief is false	If the Buddha did not visit Sri Lanka would result in both generating merit and spreading a good name for us	If a life to come does not exist it will still result in a quality married relationship.
6.	Neither true nor false	An intelligent person would conclude that it is right to pay homage to the Buddha whether he visited Sri Lanka or not	An intelligent person would conclude that it is right to live a virtuous married life whether or not a life to come exists.

The *Apaṇṇaka* method is thus an effective means and the *Apaṇṇaka Dhamma* is the Buddha *Dhamma* in application to our daily life in order to prevent possible mistakes in our life. It is a kind of “Buddhist Risk Management” because it directs us on the path to conduct regardless of our ability to demonstrate the veracity of our beliefs. Thus this Buddhist method can be applied to any uncertain circumstances and reinforce the power of our faith through the practice of doing good action in all channels: mental, verbal and action based on the Law of *kamma*.

5. Conclusion

In order to attain the Balanced Livelihood, husbands and wives need to follow the Buddhist principle *samajīvidhamma*. According to this principle, when a couple practices *saddhā*, *sīla*, *cāga* and *pañña*, they can live together in harmony not only in this life but also the next.

The question is whether the belief in the next life is important? Here the *Apaṇṇaka* method plays a crucial role. It is a kind of “Buddhist Risk Management”. That is to say it operates as a Buddhist *Dhamma*

which directs our lives regardless of whether we can prove our faith.

ENDNOTES

¹ M.I.401-414. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Part One, The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṇṇāsapāḷi), (Oxford: PTS, 2001), p.506-520.

² F. L. Woodward (tr.), *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttaranikāya)*, vol.2, (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1982), p.70.

³ Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pp.495- 496.

⁴ Nd1. 168-169.

⁵ M.III.73; Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha**, Part Three The Final Fifty Discourses (Uparipaṇṇāsapāḷi), (Oxford: PTS, 2001), p.935.

⁶ “*Apāya*” means states of loss and woe or low states of existence, namely; hell, the animal kingdom, realm of hungry ghosts and frightened ghosts”, IT.93.

⁷ D.I.55-57; Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have I Heard The Long Discourses of the Buddha Dīgha Nikāya*, (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pp.95-96.

⁸ M.I.401. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Part One The Root Fifty Discourses (Mūlapaṇṇāsapāḷi), (Oxford: PTS, 2001), p.506.

⁹ Dr. Veerachart Nimanong, “Theravāda Methods of Interpretation on Buddhist Scriptures”, *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture*, Vol.6 (February 2006): 77-120.

¹⁰ Ven. Hegoda Khemananda, *Logic and Epistemology in Theravāda (Theravāda Nyāya)*, (Sri Lanka: Karunaratne & Son Ltd., 1993), p.105.

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